

**KEN Applications Subcommittee
Assistive Technologies Workgroup
Final Report**

Charge:

The Assistive Technologies workgroup will discuss the technical needs of individuals with disabilities from the perspectives of all agencies within the Education Cabinet. The group will examine the Cabinet's use of existing assistive technologies, identify potential areas of improvement, and devise short-term and long-term plans for implementing these improvements statewide.

Scope:

Discussions will include all network-enabled assistive technologies, supporting infrastructures, policies, or procedures.

Timeline:

July 18, 2007 – Mid-project progress report to the KEN Applications Subcommittee
September 1, 2007 - Recommendations due to the Subcommittee

Workgroup Members:

COT – Teresa Ogden

Education Cabinet - Liz Stafford, Tammy Hatter, Connie Sharp

KCTCS – Bernie Sanderson

KDE – Linnie Lee

Office for the Blind - Jenny Tyree, Jimmy Brown (KATS Network), Sherry Sebastian

Office of Vocational Rehabilitation - Jeffrey Ritchie, Shannon Moler

School for the Blind – Raymond Donner

School for the Deaf – Deby Trueblood

State ADA Coordinator - Norb Ryan

I. Where we are in the use of this application:

1. The Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) and the Office for the Blind (OFB) work with Regional AT Resource Centers operated by KATS (Kentucky Assistive Technology Services). Software and hardware are tested for compatibility with various operating systems and platforms. These four AT Resource Centers work with students on-site and in the schools to evaluate individual needs, determine preferences and provide training.
2. The Office for Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) offers individual evaluations for post-secondary students and members of the work force.
3. The Cabinet's One-Stop Centers provide accessible workstations with various AT hardware and software components in their public resource rooms. However, the technology is somewhat old (five years), and training staff on how to assist users has become difficult due to high turnover.
4. OFB maintains an AT lab used for training consumers to use various AT hardware and software components.
5. KCTCS is in the process of testing its websites for accessibility.
6. COT uses AccVerify software (<http://www.hisoftware.com/access/>) to test every website that it designs for Section 508 compliance, pursuant to Enterprise Standard 7025 (http://www.gotsource.ky.gov/dsweb/Get/Document-37147/7025_Accessibility_Rev1.doc). If a website fails testing, the problems must be fixed and the website retested until it passes. For websites created by vendors, the following guidelines apply:
 - a. Third-party developers are informed about Kentucky's Web Accessibility Standard
 - b. COT provides information and resources on implementing Kentucky's Web Accessibility Standard
 - c. COT monitors and provides feedback on inaccessible third-party web pages created for the Commonwealth of Kentucky
 - d. COT and other state agencies are encouraged to seek alternative third-party developers where the original developers continue to produce non-compliant web pages
7. COT completes a template called the Accessibility Evaluation Report (<http://www.gotsource.ky.gov/dsweb/Get/Document-91870/Accessibility+Evaluation+Report.dot>) for each website evaluation. A copy of the Accessibility Evaluation Report showing all areas were

tested and passed is the documentation that shows compliance. This document is kept on file at COT and is made available on request.

8. Each state university has a Disability Resource Center to coordinate services, putting students in contact with agencies that provide AT resources (OVR and OFB). Some coordinators have a working knowledge of AT, while others may have an assistant with AT knowledge. The coordinators of both state and private postsecondary institutions meet with the State ADA Coordinator on a quarterly basis. There is limited funding for the disability resource centers in both state and private institutions, which creates a disparity of services.
9. Within KDE, and the high schools in particular, coordination of AT services is normally left to school guidance counselors or special education instructors. KDE does address AT issues within its 11 special education co-ops.
10. KDE, along with the KATS Network, keeps an AT Matrix to reflect results of their software and hardware testing, but it is not available to the public or to other state agencies.
11. KATS has developed a three-year state plan for assistive technology. KATS and OFB are now in year two of this plan (<http://www.katsnet.org/ky-state-plan.html>).

II. Where we want to go in the use of this application:

1. Set up a Service Desk to act as front-line support for students.
 - a. Online presence via IRC or another chat protocol, visible from an established website (i.e. State ADA Coordinator, Education Cabinet, KATS)
 - b. Toll-free telephone number
 - c. Staffed with agents who are knowledgeable in the services provided by each AT agency within the Cabinet
2. Keep all desktop equipment used for AT testing and training current and up to consumer market standards.
3. Publish results of any and all AT software and hardware testing conducted by KEN agencies, and make public via an established website.
 - a. Keep AT Matrix current and make it publicly available.
4. Enforce Section 508 compliance standards for all state agencies, contractors, and vendors, pursuant to KRS 61.980 thru 61.988. Apply Section 508 standards to all state agencies when they develop, procure, maintain or use

electronic and information technology. Agencies must give disabled employees and members of the public access to information that is comparable to the access available to others.

5. *Identify and implement a secure instant messaging solution for use by the hearing impaired.*
 - a. *Live help available from agency websites*
6. Promote awareness among state agencies and general public to ensure that electronic publications, documents, etc. be available to users with disabilities

III. How we are going to get there:

1. Identify existing staff resources as potential agents for the AT Service Desk.
 - a. KATS network currently employs specialists that are highly experienced in matching assistive technologies to consumers.
 - b. Use existing toll-free number for KATS Coordinating Center
 - c. Enable live online help via chat or IM and make available from KATS website.
 - d. Use KEN budget to hire and retain one additional staff resource to serve as an information and referrals specialist. This person will be the primary operator for the AT Service Desk, with calls/requests rolling over to other specialists as needed.
 - e. Service Desk operations will be based at the KATS Coordinating Center located at the Charles W. McDowell Rehabilitation Center in Louisville.
2. Allocate funds to keep AT testing lab equipment up-to-date
 - a. Purchase new hardware every year
 - b. Purchase new operating systems as they are released
 - c. Upgrade AT software and hardware as new versions are released
 - d. Ensure that testers and trainers are properly equipped to demonstrate AT to students. KATS can assist with training directly or conduct “train-the-trainer” seminars.
3. Require quarterly updates to the AT Matrix. Require yearly review of entire AT Matrix.
 - a. Quarterly updates presented as an addendum to identify issues with new software releases, patches, etc. Ensure that AT Matrix document is date stamped.
 - b. Allow KATS Resource Centers to assist with testing and updates to the AT Matrix.
 - c. Publish AT Matrix on KDE’s website and provide links to it on other Cabinet websites.

4. Write an implementation plan for enforcing Section 508 compliance when any state agency develops, procures, maintains, or uses electronic and information technology. Expand compliance standards beyond websites designed by COT to include all agencies and all web-enabled applications.
 - a. Identify and standardize testing procedures and objectives.
 - b. Have testers verify compliance with a signed document *to be filed with the State ADA Coordinator's office*.
5. *Follow standards and recommendations set forth by the IP-based Interactive Communications Workgroup.*
6. Coordinate an awareness campaign stressing the importance of accessibility.
 - a. Use KEN workshops to conduct AT demonstrations
 - b. Make text-only versions of dynamic web pages available (COT-enforced?)
 - c. Publicize AT testing services to other state agencies
7. Barriers to success include:
 - a. Diversity and segmentation among AT user community
 - b. Personal preferences and individual needs of students prevent standardization
 - c. Lack of awareness among web publishing professionals and application developers
 - d. Volatility of the AT software and hardware markets translates to frequent new version releases and rapidly changing equipment specs

IV. Impact on teaching and learning:

1. The availability of AT resources is critical to giving students with disabilities an equal opportunity to engage in classroom activities.
2. Teachers who are aware of the availability of AT are better prepared to accommodate students with disabilities.
3. Measurable outcomes include:
 - a. Statistics reflecting the number of websites and applications approved or rejected by Section 508 compliance standards
 - b. Tracking of Service Desk call volume and work logs
 - c. Use of customer satisfaction surveys as part of outtake process